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A Private letter from R. L.

By Col. E. M. Babcock

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to Mr. Kipling

March April 1894.

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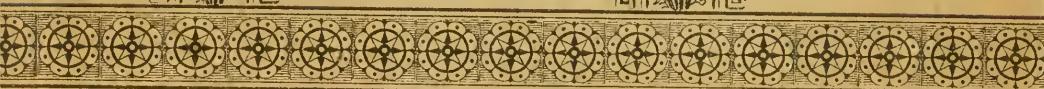
TO

GEN. R. S. RIPLEY

BY

Col. E. M. SEABROOK.

April, 1894.



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A D D R E S S

DELIVERED AT

THE UNVEILING

OF THE

RIPLEY MONUMENT

AT THE

MAGNOLIA CEMETERY,

MONDAY AFTERNOON,

APRIL 3, 1894.

BY COL. E. M. SEABROOK.

CHARLESTON, S. C.
THE DAGGETT PRINTING COMPANY, 153 EAST BAY.
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ADDRESS.

Mr. President and Members of the Survivors' Association, and Ladies and Gentlemen :

This presence and occasion, whilst it does honor to a distinguished soldier, General Roswell Sabin Ripley, also does great honor to this ancient and historical City of Charleston, by her grateful appreciation of distinguished and patriotic services, rendered in the time of sore trial and great peril.

We are here to commemorate these services, but before dwelling on them, it will not be inappropriate to notice briefly his early life.

General Roswell Sabin Ripley was the son of Christopher Ripley, who was commissioned a captain in the United States Army, by President Madison, and served during the War of 1812. General Ripley was born in Worthington, Ohio, 14th of March, 1823; entered West Point Academy from New York, 1839, and graduated in 1843 with distinction in a class noted for its ability and proficiency. He was assigned to the Second Regiment of the United States Artillery. In July, 1848, he was ordered to join the army in Mexico, and was present at the taking of Monterey, and during the siege and surrender of Vera Cruz. As an officer of the army under General Scott's command, he participated in all the battles of that memorable campaign, which illustrated to the world the bravery and skill of the American soldier, whether serving as a regular or as a volunteer. At the Battle of Chapultepec, he was brevetted Major for bravery. After the conclusion of the war with Mexico, he was stationed for a time at Fort Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island, and made many friends in this City of Charleston. In 1853 he married into one of the most respected families of South Carolina, and made his home in this State.

In 1854 he resigned his commission in the United States Army and engaged in a lucrative agency business, which required his frequent presence in Europe.

We come now to the consideration of his services to the State of South Carolina, to the City of Charleston, and to the Confederate Cause. On the 20th of December, 1860, the people of

South Carolina, in convention assembled, acting under the conviction that the Constitution, which they had assisted in framing for the government of the United States, had been violated, and that the institutions, the liberty and safety of the people, were no longer safe in the Union, in the exercise of the great right of self-preservation, resolved to "dissolve the union between the State of South Carolina, and other States united with her, under the compact entitled 'The Constitution of the United States of America.'" By this solemn act South Carolina proclaimed, to the nations of the world, her status as a sovereign State, and as an independent power. And "solitary and alone," trusting in the righteousness of her cause, and patriotism of her people, with the Palmetto flag at the mast head of the Ship of State, she assumed the duties and responsibilities of Nationality among the nations of the world.

The heart of South Carolina was throbbing with political excitement, and the rumbles of a political earthquake were audible. It was a question of the gravest speculation, whether this Act would eventuate in war, and whether the State would be joined by her sister States of the South. It was at this memorable crisis in her history that General Ripley, acting under high and noble impulses, tendered his services to the State of South Carolina, through her Governor, F. W. Pickens. Had he been influenced by selfish ambition, cognizant as he was of the resources of the North, and knowing, as he did, that in these latter days the result of war was determined not by mere bravery and sacrifice of life, but by the resources of the combatants, he would have cast his fortunes with the Northern States of the Union. Governor Pickens promptly accepted his services, and commissioned him Major of Ordnance at Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island, and he forthwith entered upon the discharge of his duties. His services at this period were invaluable. Military education and knowledge of a peculiar character were imperatively needed, and General Ripley, with his West Point education and knowledge of artillery and engineering, was the man for the emergency.

On the night of the 26th December, 1860, General Anderson, then the commander of Fort Moultrie, moved into Fort Sumter, carrying such provisions and ammunition as he could take, and leaving an engineer and six men to retain possession of Fort Moultrie. The flag staff was cut down, the guns of the fort spiked, and some of the gun carriages tarred and burned.

Such was the condition of Fort Monltrie when General Ripley entered upon the discharge of his duties. From that hour his indomitable energy and his great mental ability were exercised by day and by night, in repairing the guns and hot-shot furnaces, and putting the fort in a condition to retain her ancient name. He spared no effort in disciplining both officers and men, and instructing them in the use of heavy artillery. And how well those duties were discharged the events which followed, and which are now matters of history, will show.

It was in the early gray of the morning of April 12th that the thunder of artillery was heard in the Harbor of Charleston, and the intelligence flashed to the eager ears and anxious hearts of the people of Charleston, that the momentous struggle for the possession of Fort Sumter had begun. This remarkable bombardment continued thirty-four hours, and ended in the surrender of Fort Sumter, after a defense highly honorable to its officers and men. General Beauregard, who had been appointed to the command of South Carolina on the 1st of March, 1861, in his report of April 16th, 1861, to the Hon. L. P. Walker, Secretary of War, says: "In conclusion I am happy to state that the troops, both officers and soldiers of the Regulars, Volunteers, Militia and Navy, by their energy, zeal, perseverance, labor and endurance before the attack, and by their courage and gallantry during its continuance, exhibited all the characteristics of the best troops."

The command of Fort Moultrie fully merited the above encomium of the Commanding General, and was conspicuous for their bravery and skill in the service of their guns, and it is a matter of history that the shot fired by the hot-shot furnaces put in order at Fort Moultrie by General Ripley, contributed in no small degree to the surrender of Fort Sumter. Of General Ripley's services at this time, it is proper that the testimony of those best qualified to judge of them should be given.

General Dunovant, his ranking officer, in his report of operations against Fort Sumter, says: "The defenses of Fort Moultrie, and the preparation of the gun and mortar batteries, above and below this post, seemed to me complete and satisfactory. For this no small measure of praise is due to the sagacity, experience and unflagging zeal of Lieut.-Col. R. S. Ripley, commanding First Battalion Artillery, who was assigned to duty under my command on the 2d day of January last, when Fort Moul-

trie was considered untenable. The suggestions made by this officer in his reports, respecting the defenses of the fort, have in almost every instance been carried out, and their value has been triumphantly illustrated by the severe test to which they were subjected in the recent engagement. The guns which were used against Fort Sumter were the same which Major Anderson spiked and burned when he abandoned Fort Moultrie."

General Beauregard, in his report to the Secretary of War, says: "Of Lieut.-Col. R. S. Ripley, First Artillery Battalion, commandant of the batteries on Sullivan's Island, I cannot speak too highly, and join with General Dunovant, his immediate commander since January last, in commanding in the highest terms his sagacity, experience and unflagging zeal."

We have also the testimony of Governor Pickens. On the 3d of May, 1861, the following letter was addressed by him to General Ripley:

To Lieutenant-Colonel Ripley:

SIR—I return you my thanks and the thanks of the State for the brave and patriotic manner in which you have so nobly discharged your duties since the first time I called you into the service of the State. On the 27th of December last, I called on you to go into Fort Moultrie, when it was universally thought to be untenable, and there was immediate danger. You answered to the call like a soldier and a patriot, and when some little difficulty occurred as to rank and etiquette, you waived everything and volunteered to serve as a private at the heavy ordnance. I assigned some young men from West Point with you, Lieutenants Gibbs, Farley, Reynolds and Lieutenant Grimbald of the Navy and some other, I do not now remember exactly who it was.

You took your post and were eager to stand at your guns, although exposed to the fire of Fort Sumter and under circumstances of great danger. Afterwards I assigned the brave General Dunovant to the command of Fort Moultrie, and you were assigned in particular charge of the guns and batteries, as your experience and knowledge of heavy ordnance were highly valued by me. From that day to the capture of Fort Sumter you never relaxed, and by your energy and talents you aided more effectually than any other man in putting Fort Moultrie in such condition as to stand the terrible fire from Fort Sumter for thirty-four hours, and by your bravery and judgment in the management of your guns, and particularly by your hot-shot, you contributed certainly not less than any other single man to the reduction of that powerful fortress. You have acted nobly and heroically, and South Carolina will never forget the services you have rendered her at this most trying period of her history. I think it nothing but due you that I should pay this tribute to your merits as a soldier and an officer.

With great regard, yours truly,

F. W. PICKENS.

Soon after the surrender of Fort Sumter General Ripley was assigned to its command, and proceeded with his usual energy and ability to repair the damages of the bombardment, and to restore the fort to its former condition. And how well his work was accomplished, let the biographer of General Beauregard tell: "With skill and energy this work was done, and in less than three weeks, no vestige of the former injuries remained—the broken chassis, and carriages had been replaced, the barracks rebuilt in one story in height, instead of two as formerly, and the walls restored to their previous condition."

After months of indefatigable service, he naturally felt with his friends that the Confederate authorities at Richmond were tardy in bestowing upon him the promotion he so justly merited. The rumor prevailing that General Ripley intended resigning, public opinion found expression in the following letter addressed to him, by patriotic and representative citizens:

POSTOFFICE,
CHARLESTON, July 29th, 1861. }

MY DEAR SIR—The deep anxiety we feel in the safety of our native city, our native State and our native South, will, we trust, sufficiently apologize for the liberty we are now taking. It is rumored that your resignation is contemplated by yourself, and believing, as we assuredly do, that this whole community would regard such resolution on your part as nothing less than a public calamity, we entreat you to pause, and, if possible, to refrain.

We should immediately be plunged into that state of feebleness that could not do other than depress our people and equally encourage our enemy. Many of us are painfully affected by the cause which may possibly lead you to this course—but however slow justice sometimes seems to be, her decree is not less sure. Our conviction is, that our indebtedness to your wisdom is beyond being measured, and we most earnestly beg that you will at least leave us the opportunity of saying not what we think and feel, but what we know, and above all what we shall fear, should we be called on to mourn your departure from us.

With highest respect and gratitude for services already rendered,

We remain your obedient servants,

ALFRED HUGER,
ELIAS VANDERHORST,
ALLEN S. IZARD,
HENRY GOURDIN,
DANIEL RAVENEL,
ROBERT N. GOURDIN,
C. REMEDES,
JOHN RAVENEL.

LIEUT.-COL. R. S. RIPLEY.

General Ripley yielded to the public sentiment and remained

in the service. On the 21st August, 1861, he was appointed Brigadier-General of the Provisional Army of the Confederate States, and assigned to the command of the Department of South Carolina, and the coast defenses of the State.

General Ripley entered upon the discharge of his duties with renewed zeal, and devoted himself with untiring energy, and great ability, to the strengthening of the defenses of Charleston Harbor, and of the coast. The authorities at Washington at the same time were preparing a powerful fleet, and a land force, for offensive operations against South Carolina. On the 9th of November, 1861, the attack was made on the forts of Port Royal, and resulted in the surrender of those forts, after a heroic defense, and the abandonment of the islands on the coast.

When public calamities occur, the public mind, under the influence of excitement, and passion, is apt to do injustice, but history rights the wrong, and vindicates truth and justice; and so it was in this case. Blame was freely attached to the Confederate and State authorities, as well as to the officers in command. But they did all that could be done under the circumstances that surrounded them, and were free from blame. And history will so record it. The fall of Port Royal, and its attendant circumstances, was the inevitable result of the superior resources of the enemy.

Soon after the fall of Port Royal, Gen. Robert E. Lee was sent to the Southern seaboard, for the purpose of supervising the measures for its defense, and for a time had his headquarters in South Carolina. It is almost superfluous to say that in the discharge of his duties, the sagacity, skill and ability which distinguished him, were conspicuously exhibited.

In March, 1862, General Lee was summoned to Richmond, and charged with the conduct of military operations of the Armies of the Confederacy, under the direction of the President.

March 14th, Brigadier-General J. C. Pemberton, who had been in command of the Fourth Military District of South Carolina, extending from the Ashepoo to the Port Royal entrance, since December 10th, 1861, was assigned to the command of the Department of South Carolina and Georgia, with the rank of Major-General. General Pemberton made Charleston his headquarters. General Ripley continued his services with unabated zeal, and rare ability. A serious difference of opinion, however, arose between Major-General Pemberton and General Ripley as

to the defense of Charleston. General Pemberton was in favor not only of the evacuation of Cole's Island, but of the demolition of the forts, after the removal of the guns. He thought that the defense of the city should be made "from, and around the city itself." In his communication of May 21st, 1862, to General Lee, these views are thus expressed:

"I am decidedly of the opinion that the most effectual defense of the City of Charleston can, and should be made from, and around the city itself. I believe that when the enemy is prepared to assault the forts, at the entrance of the harbor, he will do so in such force, and with such appliances, as will reduce it to a question of time only. Our great reliance being on these works, when they fall, our means of defense will be inadequate to hold the city; but with the guns now within their walls, I am satisfied that however great might be the injury to the city itself, from bombardment, his feet could be kept from polluting its streets. This has for some time been my opinion. The forts should not only be dismounted, but destroyed. They will be of no use to us after the war in their present condition, for I take it impregnable iron-clad batteries must take the place of stone and mortar. I propose this subject to the serious consideration of the Department."

General Ripley, on the other hand, believed in strengthening the forts and the batteries in and around Charleston Harbor, holding Cole's Island, fortifying the west end of Morris Island, and constructing a strong line of defense across James Island. He held the opinion that the enemy would not attempt the reduction of Cole's Island, until full preparation was made, which would require considerable time, and thus give ample opportunity for the construction of the line of defense across James Island, for the gathering of the corps on John's Island and the removal of property. He believed also that the occupation of the forts was of great importance to the Confederacy, in protecting blockade-runners in bringing in necessary supplies. These views were expressed in a communication to the Military Headquarters at Richmond. Early in May, by order of General Pemberton, Cole's Island and Battery Island were evacuated and their guns removed.

On the 17th the enemy's gunboats entered Stono River, and under their cover June 2d, the landing of troops on James Island commenced, which by the 15th, as estimated, amounted to

between ten and twelve thousand men of all arms. On the 16th the enemy advanced, and the hard contested battle of Secessionville was fought against greatly superior numbers, and won by the heroic conduct of our troops, and the sacrifice of valuable lives.

On 23d April, 1862, General Ripley applied to be relieved from duty, in the Department of South Carolina. His application having been referred to Major-General Pemberton, was returned to the Military Headquarters at Richmond, with the following endorsement:

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT S. C.)
POCOTALIGO, April 25th, 1862.)

Respectfully forwarded and approved as this is the wish of General Ripley, to be relieved from duty in this department; although, from his knowledge of Charleston, the topography of the neighborhood, and his own resources and energy, it will not be easy to replace him.

J. C. PEMBERTON,
Major-General Commanding.

General Ripley not being relieved, still continued on duty.

The military views of General Pemberton as to the defense of Charleston (however wise and patriotic they may have been) did not accord with public opinion, and a spirit of dissatisfaction manifested itself. In a reply to a communication of Governor Pickens on this subject, General Lee, on May 15th, 1862, says: "I see no way of adjusting the matter, save the relieving of General Ripley, in compliance with his request. I should regret to take this step, inasmuch as his ability and knowledge of affairs in Charleston Harbor would be very essential in time of attack. As he seems to be dissatisfied, however, it may be the best thing to gratify his wishes. On the other hand, the Hon. W. Porcher Miles, W. D. Porter and A. G. Magrath deprecate his removal, and think his absence at this time would be disastrous. They recommend giving General Ripley the direct control, and responsibility for the defense of Charleston District, independent of General Pemberton. This is impossible to do, while General Pemberton is in command of the department."

In a communication of May 15th, 1862, General Lee, in reply to one on the same subject, from Hon. W. P. Miles, W. D. Porter and A. G. Magrath, says: "Your suggestion to relieve General Ripley of all direct control by General Pemberton could not be adopted, as long as General Pemberton retained command of the Department of South Carolina and Georgia. The defense of

the two cities, Charleston and Savannah, is so closely associated, that it is deemed undesirable to constitute each of the States a separate department, under a separate commander. General Ripley appears dissatisfied, and anxious to change his field of operation, and although recognizing the importance of his presence at Charleston, particularly should the city be attacked, yet it appears best to comply with his repeated request, and relieve him from his present command."

On May 24th, 1862, General Ripley, in compliance with his request, was relieved of his command in South Carolina, and ordered to Richmond for duty with the regiments of Colonel Moore of South Carolina, and Colonel Gibson of Georgia.

As soon as the proper arrangements could be made and transportation furnished, General Ripley reported with his command at Richmond. Time will not permit me to enter into details as to his services in Virginia; suffice it to say that he participated in the battles around Richmond, and at Malvern Hill. He served with the Army of Northern Virginia until after the battle of Sharpsburg, where he was wounded in the throat.

On the 8th of October, President Davis, in reply to a communication from General Pickens, says: "Your request for General Ripley will be complied with, if General Lee can spare him."

On the same day the following communication was addressed to General Lee by G. W. Randolph, Secretary of War:

"General W. D. Smith is dead, and General Beauregard is pressing for General Ripley. Have you any objection to his transfer to Charleston? Answer by telegraph."

On October 10th, 1862, General Ripley was ordered to proceed to Charleston, and report for duty to General Beauregard, commanding. On the 16th of the same month, he was assigned to the command of the First Military District, vice Brigadier-General W. D. Smith deceased, and on the 25th he made a report of great ability, giving a full statement of the military status of his district, and also his views as to the defense of Charleston Harbor. General Ripley again urged the importance of fortifying the west end of Morris Island, but circumstances beyond his control prevented him from carrying out his views. Had they been carried out, Charleston would not have suffered, as she did, from the bombardment of the enemy on Morris Island. Nor would Fort Sumter and Battery Wagner have been compelled to pass through the fiery ordeal that they did.

General Ripley remained on duty in the First Military District of South Carolina, and contributed not less than any other man to the successful defense of Charleston Harbor, especially of Fort Sumter, whose defense stands unsurpassed in history for skill, bravery and endurance. When the evacuation of Fort Sumter became a necessity, in consequence of the advance of General Sherman's Army across the Savannah River, General Ripley was ordered to join the Army of the West, and reported to General Johnson on the evening of the Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina. That night the army was ordered to Smithfield, for the purpose of reorganization. General Ripley repaired there. While the reorganization was being effected he was again ordered to South Carolina for duty. Arriving at Chester, South Carolina, he heard of the surrender of the Confederate Armies, and the fall of the Confederacy. He then joined his family at Society Hill, South Carolina, and after a short time went with them to England, and obtained employment in a manufacturing establishment in London.

At that time the French Government, anticipating a war with Prussia, offered him a lucrative contract for a large number of rifles, which he accepted. While preparing to fill the contract, the machinery which he expected to use for that purpose was claimed by the United States Government, as property of the Confederacy, and this caused the failure of the contract. General Ripley returned to New York, and made a brave struggle for a support. Having cast his fortunes with the Confederacy, he bore the consequence of defeat bravely, and manfully, without repining.

General Ripley was a ready and able writer. His "History of the War with Mexico" received the highest commendation of the critics of the day. His Military Reports will stand favorable comparison with those of any military commander.

There was one trait in General Ripley's character which merits special notice. Military success, and the glory which attends it, is apt to make men so avaricious of praise that they too frequently seek to monopolize it. General Ripley was an exception in this respect. He always endeavored to bestow upon his subordinates, officers and men, the full measure of praise due them.

On the night of the 29th March, 1887, he died in the City of New York.

In his last moments his thoughts turned with affection to the City of Charleston, and it was natural that he should express the wish to rest in this cemetery, adjacent to the scene of his greatest achievements and among the people in whose behalf those services were rendered.

The distinguished Mayor, Wm. A. Courtenay, and the City Council, took prompt action to comply with his wishes, and to pay due honor to his memory.

On the 3d of April his remains were received by Brigadier-General T. A. Huguenin, and his staff, and the Regimental Officers and their staff, and escorted to St. Luke's Church for the funeral services.

These were performed by the Rev. John Johnson, assisted by the Rev. Robert Wilson. It was a happy and touching incident that General Huguenin and the Rev. John Johnson, who had both rendered distinguished services in the defense of Charleston under his command, should have been spared to participate in the ceremonies of this occasion.

After the funeral services his remains were borne to these grounds, consecrated to the loved and honored memories of our dead, and this monument of polished Carolina granite, which marks his resting place, is a worthy memorial to a distinguished and patriotic soldier, and an honor to the Survivor's Association and the citizens of Charleston.

The ceremonies were then concluded by the following prayer, offered up by the Rev. C. E. Chichester:

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, be pleased to look upon us with Thine approving smile, as we are here assembled to do honor to, and manifest our respect and love for, one who was our brave commander, in what we believe to have been a just and righteous cause—the maintenance of that constitutional liberty which was bequeathed to us by our forefathers as a sacred trust, and the defense of our families and homes against a foe bent on conquest and destruction.

Though we were crushed by overwhelming numbers, and compelled by might to yield submission, yet we are assured in Thy Holy Word, that Truth can never be destroyed, but that it will, in Thine own good time, again arise and assert its power over error and falsehood.

We leave the vindication of our actions in Thy hands, believing that the time is not far distant, when the world shall acknowledge the justice of the cause for which we fought, and for which so many brave men willingly sacrificed their lives.

May those of us who are still spared, remember that we are steadily marching onward to the grave, and the time allotted to us to do our work upon earth, is growing shorter every day. Help us to spend the time properly, in doing our duty to Thee and to our fellow-men, so that when the order comes for us to strike our tents, we may be ready to obey unmurmuringly, and to leave our earthly house of this tabernacle to dwell forever in those heavenly mansions, prepared for all those who put their trust in the great Captain of our Salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name alone we offer these our petitions, and to whom, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, the Triune God, we will render all honor, obedience and service throughout eternity. Amen.



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